

Compliments of Stacey Shanner

Good to Be
issue 17

HOME



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*Merry
Christmas*




Front of Tear Out Card 1



MAPLE-GLAZED
apple cookies



SHANNER
REALTY



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Back of Tear Out Card 1

MAKES 22 COOKIES

ingredients:

FOR THE BROWN BUTTER
¾ c. unsalted butter,
room temperature

**FOR THE SPICED
APPLE COOKIES**
2 c. all-purpose flour
½ c. almond flour
1 tbsp. apple pie spice
½ tsp. baking soda
½ tsp. baking powder
½ tsp. salt
¾ c. light brown sugar
½ c. granulated sugar
½ c. unsweetened applesauce
1 large egg yolk
2 tsp. vanilla extract
1 c. shredded apple

FOR THE MAPLE GLAZE
1½ c. confectioners' sugar
1 tbsp. maple syrup
½ tsp. vanilla extract
1 tbsp. milk, plus more
as needed

maple-glazed APPLE COOKIES

instructions:

1. Melt the butter in a heavy bottom saucepan over medium heat for 7 to 10 minutes, or until the butter starts to foam. Whisk continuously until brown bits start to form. Depending on your stove and saucepan, the entire process should take 10 to 15 minutes. Immediately remove the pan from the heat, and pour the brown butter into the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment to cool slightly.
2. In a medium mixing bowl, whisk together the flour, almond flour, apple pie spice, baking soda, baking powder and salt until well combined. Add the sugars, applesauce, egg yolk and vanilla to the butter and mix until smooth and well combined. Stir the dry ingredients into the wet until just combined. Fold in the shredded apple until well combined. Cover the dough with plastic wrap and chill it in the fridge for at least 2 hours.
3. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Line two large baking sheets with parchment paper.
4. Scoop 2-tbsp. amounts of cookie dough onto the baking sheets, spacing them 2 inches apart. Bake for 12 to 14 minutes, or until the edges of the cookies are set and lightly golden brown and the centers are slightly puffed. Keep the cookies on the hot baking sheets for 5 minutes before transferring them to a cooling rack to cool to room temperature.
5. While the cookies cool, make the glaze. In a medium mixing bowl, add the confectioners' sugar and stir in the maple syrup, vanilla and milk until well combined. Drizzle the glaze on top of the cooled cookies. Allow 20 to 30 minutes for the glaze to set before serving.

Reprinted with permission from *Sugar + Spice Cookies* by Megan Neveu.
Page Street Publishing Co. 2022. Photo credit: Megan Neveu.



Dear Bill and Judy,

“Hearth and home” takes on a special meaning during the holidays as your home becomes a gathering place for relatives, lifelong friends, and others you hold dear. This issue of Good to Be Home offers inspiration for ways you can make the season extra special for both you and your loved ones, including a list of the best stocking stuffers for home cooks, decorating ideas from TV star Taniya Nayak, and a guide to budget-friendly DIY decor.

It can be challenging to think of the right gifts for friends and family. However, the guide in this issue has you covered with a list of stocking stuffer ideas that are ideal for the budding chefs in your life.

If you’ve ever seen an episode of ABC’s The Great Christmas Light Fight, you may have felt inspired, inadequate, or a little bit of both about your own holiday decorating. Its cohost, Taniya Nayak, shares the secrets behind the show, her favorite contestants from years past, and her take on elevating a home’s seasonal decor.

Transforming your home into a holiday wonderland can be fun, but it can also cost a small fortune if you’re looking to buy all-new items. However, there are plenty of easy solutions for making use of the materials already at your disposal. Inside you’ll learn four ways you can decorate simply and creatively without breaking the bank.

May your home be filled with joy and love this season! As always, it’s a pleasure to send you this magazine.

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Picture this: the fireplace is burning, the tree is lit, and the stockings are overflowing. But while the youngsters may be satisfied with the usual candy and small toys, the adults in your life might be looking for something a bit more useful. To help you find the perfect small gifts for them, here’s a list of the best kitchen gadgets any loved one is sure to enjoy.

Digital food thermometer | Cooking meat to the right temperature can be a bit of a guessing game. Help your recipient avoid this stress with an instant-read or digital thermometer from Cuisinart or Kizen that gives a fast, accurate read of internal temperatures. They’ll be able to quickly check the temperature of steaks, chicken breasts, or whole turkeys, gaining peace of mind that they’ve reached the right level of doneness.

Beeswax food wraps | Plastic wrap can serve many purposes, but it’s also a single-use item that soon finds its way into the trash. This holiday season, consider gifting beeswax food wraps, the reusable alternative to plastic wrap that can seal jars and bowls and protect half-used fruits and veggies. You can find ones in different shapes and sizes from companies such as Bee’s Wrap and Goldilocks Goods.

Garlic press | From pasta to wings to potatoes, garlic adds a wonderful flavor that enhances any dish. And a garlic press

like Zulay’s two-in-one version, which can mince and slice the cloves, makes using the staple ingredient that much easier.

Meat chopper | You may be scratching your head wondering what this chopper is for, but it’ll soon become your loved one’s new favorite kitchen gadget. This spatula-like tool from brands like GoodCook, OXO, and Farberware has multiple blades that easily chop, blend, or mash meat or vegetables while they cook in a pan on the stove.

Electric spice grinder | Preground spices are very convenient, but nothing compares to a fresh grind since it makes the flavors and aroma more powerful. Gift an electric spice grinder like Cuisinart’s electric spice-and-nut grinder, and your loved one may never go back to preground again.

Knife sharpener | In the kitchen, there's nothing more frustrating than trying to cut an onion or carrot with a dull knife. Help your loved one meal prep with ease by gifting them an electric knife sharpener from KitchenIQ or Longzon. This gadget won’t take up a lot of space and will help keep both knives and scissors in great working condition.

Take your stocking-stuffer game to the next level this holiday season by gifting these useful kitchen gadgets that will make cooking a little more fun.

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written by: MATTHEW BRADY

photography by: NATALIE LASLEY SOCIAL MARKETING

wrapped up in



sustainability

ONE OF THE GREATEST JOYS OF THE HOLIDAY SEASON IS OPENING PRESENTS. AFTERWARD? NOT SO MUCH, AS WE'RE LEFT WITH HEAPS OF PAPER, BOWS, AND RIBBONS TO CLEAN UP, WHICH USUALLY GET CRAMMED INTO A LARGE TRASH BAG THAT'S THEN STUFFED INTO THE GARBAGE CAN WITHOUT A SECOND THOUGHT.

But perhaps we should take a pause. It's estimated that Americans throw away a whopping 4.6 million pounds of wrapping paper every year—and half of that inevitably winds up in landfills.

One woman was determined to change this disturbing trend. Columbia, Missouri, resident Libby Hampel consistently sought out American-made gift wrap that was both visually intriguing and truly 100 percent recyclable. The search grew exhausting and felt never-ending since most of the ones she found had unclear messaging about their actual recyclability. Armed with a passion for design and the planet, she set out instead to create what she couldn't find: a line of wrapping paper that met her standards.

Perfecting her craft

Hampel began her journey studying and experimenting with surface-pattern designs like fabric and wallpaper before eventually transitioning to textile design, where she developed her trademark style and use of color. Just before COVID-19 struck, she considered licensing her designs and freelancing her work; however, the pandemic scuttled her plans.

Realizing she now had a collection of original designs, Hampel redirected her focus in 2021 to establishing her own business, which would align with her principles. She chose the name MASU, from the Japanese words for “giving from you” (*agemasu*) and “giving to you” (*kuremasu*).

Picking a paper partner

In this new venture, Hampel's mission was to source only recyclable and sustainable materials at every phase of the production process, support her local economy, and produce everything in the United States.

However, finding an American paper mill that met her standards was a challenge. “Lots of companies out there claim eco-friendliness, but I wasn't going to jump on the greenwashing bandwagon,” she says. Hampel was relieved when she finally found New Hampshire-based Monadnock Paper Mills. As the oldest continuously operating paper mill in the country, the two-hundred-year-old company marries longevity with a high sustainability profile. “Since our core values were so aligned, I ordered a few samples of their Astrolite PC 100 Velvet paper,” Hampel shares. “As soon as I held it in my hands, I knew there was no going back!”

Hampel's paper of choice is not only sustainable but also ideal for coated fine text and cover applications—the ink doesn't absorb into the high-quality coating of the paper, making her playful, thoughtful, and bold designs and colors pop. And her customers love it; they swear that her wrapping paper is luxurious to the touch, does not crack or scratch, and is easy to wrap with.

“When people think of recycled paper, the general misconception is that it's poor quality and not worth the price,”

Hampel notes. “Through MASU, my goal is to show people that they don't need to sacrifice quality or sustainability to have a gorgeous product. You really can have it all.”

This sentiment even extends to her packaging. Hampel works with a local corrugator to create custom, easy-to-open, recyclable boxes for her products that ship flat and use 100 percent recyclable tape rather than the ubiquitous plastic film that typically encases wrapping paper. The overall result is a product that looks good, feels good, and does good in every respect.

Expanding her mission

So what's next for Hampel and MASU? “I'm really excited to get into greeting cards and gift tags,” she divulges. “My plan is to continue creating, growing, and building relationships with sustainable partners who can help elevate my vision now and into the future.”

For more info, visit givemasu.com



Making Sense of *Real Estate Market Shifts*

written by:
BONNIE JOFFE

As a homeowner or renter, you may look at the real estate market—which is notoriously difficult to predict, even for top analysts—and decide it’s better to leave figuring it out to the professionals. However, understanding the basics of it can help you determine when it’s the right time to buy or sell. If you’re considering making a real estate move, use this guide to better understand market shifts and learn how you can use this knowledge to your advantage.

Phases of the real estate cycle

The real estate cycle, which can last a decade or more, is the core influencer of the state of the real estate market; it’s what drives expansion and contraction and what causes market swings. This ultimately affects home prices, inventory levels, interest rates, mortgage availability, and investment opportunities.

This cycle is categorized into four phases: recovery, expansion, hyper supply, and recession. It’s also circular—when the last phase ends, the first one begins again. Understanding these phases and how they flow can help you decide when it’s the right time to buy or sell.

Recovery

This is the first and longest phase of the cycle. It has many of the same characteristics as a recession, such as high unemployment rates and low demand for goods and services. Although the market is still in a recessionary period, it is

beginning to show signs of growth: home prices are becoming more affordable and inventory levels are increasing.

Expansion

Businesses are growing and hiring and consumer spending is on an upward trajectory during this phase. The real estate market has yet to heat up, but the oversupply of inventory is being absorbed, and the number of days houses sit on the market is decreasing, even as pricing remains affordable for buyers.

Hyper supply

In this phase, the market begins to shift and the demand for real estate reaches its highest point. Prices are escalating and supply is dwindling, so it can be an opportune time

for homeowners to sell. However, buyers should closely monitor market trends to determine if purchasing during this phase is prudent.

Recession

At this point, the economy begins to contract, and, as a result, most industries reduce their production, causing layoffs. Consumers are also conserving their money and pulling back their spending on goods and services. In addition, home supply levels and days on the market are beginning to creep up and interest rates are rising to help control inflation, making it challenging for buyers and sellers alike to make the moves they want.

The key influencers

The real estate cycle is impacted by several factors that can cause the market to shift, affecting your ability to purchase or sell a home.

Interest rates and affordability

Rates are constantly changing, and the demand for housing will always follow suit. As rates increase and affordability drops, a shrinking market occurs. But when rates are on a downward trend, potential homeowners become incentivized to buy, ultimately driving up the housing demand.

The economy

After an expansion, the economy reaches its growth potential and begins to contract. Likewise, the real estate cycle peaks and the demand for housing decreases, resulting in a market slowdown.

Unemployment

As unemployment rises, people begin to fear losing their jobs, which may discourage them from purchasing homes. Conversely, a low unemployment rate means more people are earning an income and are likely able to afford a home.



Consumer confidence

A robust economy usually goes hand in hand with high consumer confidence. When the real estate market is positive, buyers are more likely to feel comfortable taking out a home loan. However, when the market begins to waver and the word *recession* starts permeating conversations, buyers may put their home purchase plan on the back burner.

Government policies and subsidies

Legislation can also affect the real estate cycle phases. For example, when the government offers tax credits, deductions, a first-time homebuyer's tax credit, and other subsidies, it can temporarily stimulate the demand for real estate.

Population shifts

Population changes can cause major shifts in the real estate market. For instance, baby boomers have been entering retirement age, and many have downsized their homes and moved closer to their adult children and grandchildren. As a result, states like Florida, Arizona, and Nevada have had the highest net migration in the past two decades, making these states more likely to experience a market boom as the trend continues.

If you're thinking about buying or selling, consult with your real estate agent to better understand the current real estate cycle and how it may affect your decision.

joyful decorating

interview with: TANIYA NAYAK written by: LAUREN KIM photography: AS NOTED

Taniya Nayak, cohost of ABC's *The Great Christmas Light Fight*, brings her bubbly and powerful presence to her work both on and off the screen. Here she shares her design secrets and how she gets into the holiday spirit.

***The Great Christmas Light Fight* features some of the most brilliant holiday displays. Which have been your favorites over the years?** That's hard—I

have so many. But an especially memorable one was a display by Arkansas native Sam Finney, one of our winners. He's a widow and has acres of property. He did all the decorating himself to create a massive holiday walking tour. There was something very magical and touching about it.

I also really loved the creations of Yusi An of Houston, one of our other winners. She used huge Chinese lanterns, like those often lit for the Chinese New Year, to make a city of lights in



photos courtesy of:
TANIYA NAYAK

photos courtesy of: TANIYA NAYAK



an empty parking lot. Part of the reason why I loved it so much is because, while the show is called *The Great Christmas Light Fight*, it's really a holiday show. There are so many kinds of displays—it's hard to judge which one is best, and choosing only one winner is always difficult.

What's it like traveling across the country to visit all the holiday lights? The travel is fun, but the schedule can be intense. My cohost, Carter Oosterhouse, and I ping-

pong back and forth across the country. For example, one day I could be enjoying warm and sunny weather in Florida and the next I'm in three feet of snow in Massachusetts. Since our schedules can be long and hectic, and because we wait until it gets dark out to film the lights and surprise the families, I'm often pretty exhausted as I wait in my car to get started. But the contestants' energy is so infectious, and they give me such a boost—it's their big moment!

How do you celebrate the holidays? I decorate, but not to the extent you see on the show. The families we film go all out—I could never match that level. Plus, I usually get back home only about a week before Christmas. My husband, Brian O'Donnell, is a restaurateur, and I love to cook, so we really enjoy entertaining our family and friends. We usually get together for dinner on Christmas Eve. It's all about family and being together.

That said, every now and then our film schedule runs long, and I only get home a few days before Christmas. In those instances, Brian and I will take a plane on Christmas Day to our vacation home in Fort Lauderdale and celebrate there.

You also own a design firm. Is it tough juggling your work there with your TV appearances? Ever since I appeared on my first show, *Knock First*, in 2003, my dad would say, "Your TV work isn't going to last forever, so

you should have your two feet on the ground.” So in 2005, I launched my Boston-based interior design firm, Taniya Nayak Design Inc. We do both residential and commercial design. We’ve designed many restaurants, including several Ruth’s Chris Steak Houses; many different projects for Tuscan Brands, including a marketplace and some hotel work; and several condo developments. One of my newest ventures is a commercial-grade wallcovering collection with MDC Interior Solutions.

I somehow manage to juggle all this while filming my shows—luckily, I have an amazing team of eight in my firm who help me balance it all. I feel proud that I have my firm and a master’s degree in interior architecture.

You’ve remodeled both your Boston and Fort Lauderdale homes. How did you renovate your Boston residence?

The main thing we did was knock down walls to create an open floor plan. Our home overlooks a river and has a large window with a view of the water. It’s so beautiful to see how it transforms over the seasons—we have gorgeous, snowy New England winters, lush greens and blues in summer, and oranges and other vibrant autumn colors in fall. My husband and I put two chairs by the window so we can enjoy the view and relax with our coffee or wine. We use them so often that they are getting a bit worn now.

What about your Fort Lauderdale home?

We actually own two one-bedroom condos in Florida, and I designed them both. The newer one is very monochromatic and super neutral because that’s my style. I didn’t want to detract from its amazing waterfront view, so I brought in a lot of textures to create an urban vibe while keeping it cozy. If your home has a view, you should emphasize it with your design, not compete with it. My parents vacation in the other condo. It makes me so happy to have them there.



photo courtesy of: TANIYA NAYAK



photo by: JACQUELINE KNABBen

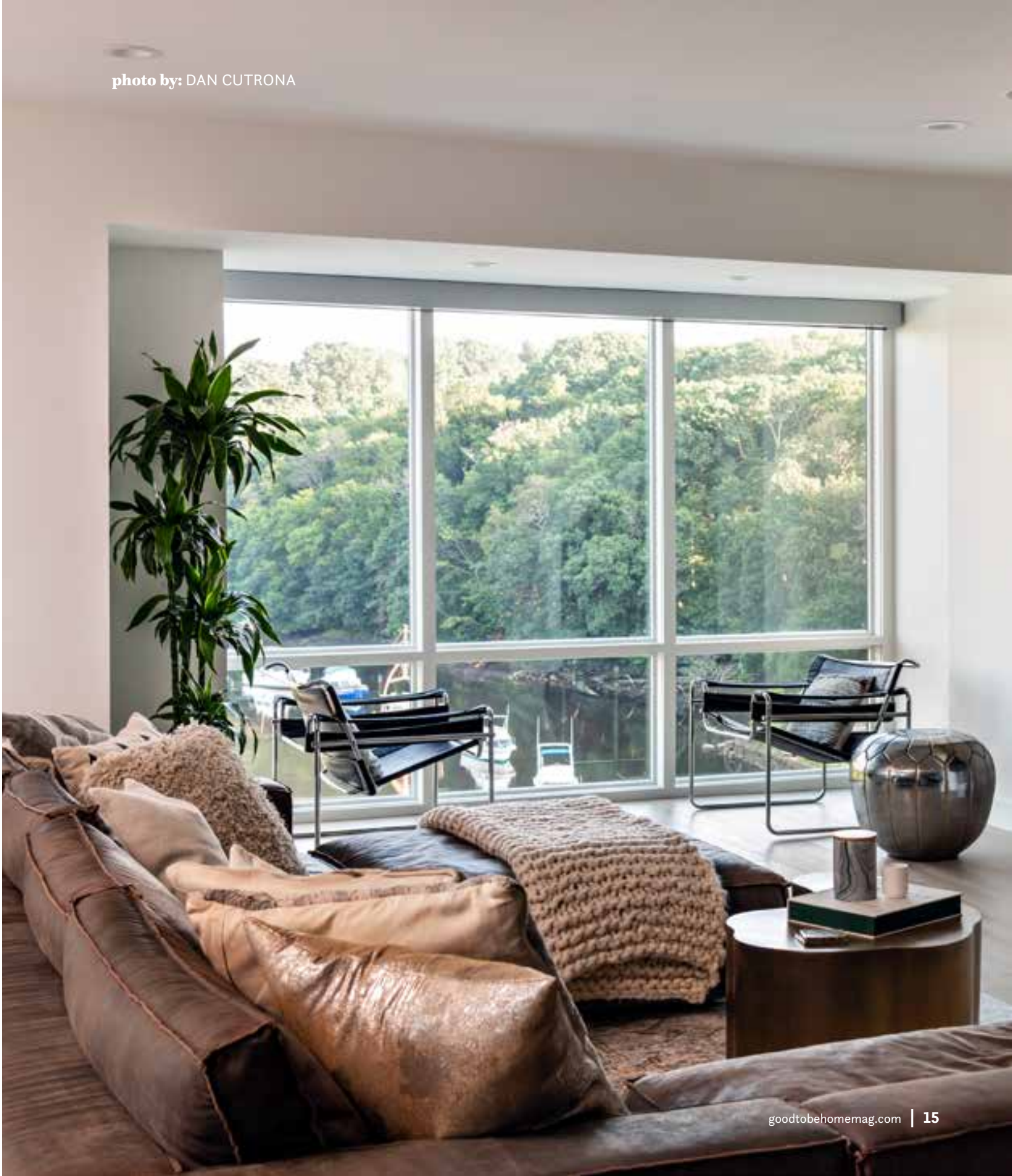


photo by: DAN CUTRONA



photo by: JACQUELINE KNABBEN

How does being a dog owner affect your home design? I don't know how this little meatball came into our lives, but Flynn has single-handedly instigated so many design changes in our Boston home. One big reason why is because English bulldogs shed. We had dark wood floors when we moved, and all I saw were scratches and fur, so we went with lighter floors. We also had a fabric sofa that collected dirt and fur; we got rid of that and now have a mocha-colored leather one that's much easier to clean.

How can a homeowner pinpoint their own design style? If you aren't sure what your style is, you should open your closet and look at what you wear—it can tell you so much about what you like. For instance, my style is monochromatic,

but I always add a statement piece to each outfit, such as big earrings or a cool ring.

I do the same thing in my living spaces. For example, in my Boston home, we have a timeless Eames chair made of black leather and molded wood in the corner of our living room. We also have a waterfall edge on our countertop and a funky chandelier over our dining room table. I try to create longevity for both myself and my clients. No matter who I'm designing for, I want them to love the way their home looks and feels for years to come.

For more info, visit taniyanayak.com



photo by: JACQUELINE KNABBEN



photo by: DAN CUTRONA



The Dos and Don'ts OF CURB APPEAL

written by:
ALLISON GOMES



First impressions are everything when it comes to selling your home. Potential buyers should be interested in your property from the moment they park their car at the curb. To help you make your home stand out, take a closer look at what you should and shouldn't do when it comes to improving your home's curb appeal.

DON'T *go overboard with adornments*

From holiday decorations to personal touches like door hangers and yard signs, it's important to remember to keep exterior ornamentation minimal. Potential buyers should be able to picture themselves in your home, and too much personalization can make that impossible for them.

DO *paint or replace your front door*

Your front door plays an important role in shaping a buyer's first impressions of your home, so consider painting it a vibrant color, such as red or blue, or a contrasting color to the rest of the house to help it stand out. And if your door is damaged and irreparable, replace it with something more modern, which, as a bonus, often offers a high return on investment.

DON'T *neglect your roof and gutters*

Besides being your home's first lines of defense against water damage, your roof and gutters can also impact what potential buyers think of it. If there's moss or algae on the roof, missing or damaged shingles, or dangling gutters, they will notice and likely assume that the rest of the house hasn't been taken care of either. Be sure to repair or replace problem areas before you put your home on the market to prevent them from making buyers less interested in your property.





DO *add outdoor lighting*

Buyers often like to see what a home looks like at various points of the day, including in the evening. To accommodate them, consider adding lighting to the exterior of your home. Place solar-powered lights along your walkway leading to the front door, or invest in downlights or uplights to highlight your home's best features.

DON'T *forget about your mailbox*

The little details matter when it comes to curb appeal, so if your mailbox is outdated or worn out, it's probably time to replace it. Find one that adds character to the landscape or creates a bold statement by your door. Since a mailbox is a frequently used item, any potential buyer will appreciate having a new, stylish one for years to come.



DO *pressure-wash your sidewalks, driveway, and patio*

The exterior of your home needs to be in tip-top shape if you want to get the best offer, and a quick cleaning is the best way to get it sparkling. When the temperature is mild, you may want to pressure-wash your front and back porch, sidewalks, and driveway, working to make these areas grime-free. If your brick or siding has any algae or dirt buildup, you can also use the pressure washer to make it look brand new.

DON'T *make your landscape a headache*

While you may love attending to a large garden or fickle plants, the next homeowners may not; a high-maintenance yard or garden might even turn them off completely. Try to simplify your home's landscape as much as possible. A ton of different



species from various regions likely won't last long if they're not regularly attended to. Instead, stick with plants specific to your area that will grow back year after year and require minimal maintenance.

DO *get rid of dead plants and leaves*

Piles of dry leaves or dead branches are unsightly at any point of the year, but they are especially off-putting when your house is on the market. Buyers don't want to see a yard in disarray, and it can even lead them to think the rest of the house is unkept. Break out the rake, cut down any dead or hanging branches, and work to rid your yard of any unappealing materials.

DON'T *leave rusted or rotted materials*

There's nothing more concerning than rotted wood or rusted hardware on doors or windows. These will catch potential buyers' attention and make your house look neglected and worse for wear. Don't ignore these basics—be sure to repair them quickly, and bring in a professional for projects that are beyond your skill level.

DO *keep up with your neighborhood's aesthetic*

Whatever updates you make to your home, you don't want to stray too far outside of the norm for your neighborhood. For example, painting your exterior a bright color when the rest of your neighborhood is neutral may make your home stand out for the wrong reason. Instead, opt for colors that will appeal to most potential buyers, such as white or gray.

Improving your home's curb appeal can help you attract more potential buyers and sell your home for a better price. Be sure to work with a trusted real estate agent to better determine what updates you should make to your home's exterior.

cuckoo for Cookies!

recipes by: MEGAN NEVEU

photos by: MEGAN NEVEU,
UNLESS NOTED

The holiday season is defined by time with loved ones, beloved traditions, and delicious food—in particular, soft, warm, and gooey cookies. If you're looking for ideas to switch up your traditional tins of chocolate chip or sugar, look no further! These recipes from the *Sugar + Spice Cookies* cookbook feature tantalizing tastes and unique flavor combinations that are sure to make them annual staples.



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from *Sugar + Spice Cookies* by
Megan Neveu. Page Street
Publishing Co. 2022.

maple-glazed **Apple Cookies** // *Makes 22 cookies*

Ingredients:

For the brown butter

- ¾ cup unsalted butter, room temperature

For the spiced apple cookies

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- ½ cup almond flour
- 1 tablespoon apple pie spice
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¾ cup light brown sugar
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- ½ cup unsweetened applesauce
- 1 large egg yolk
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1 cup shredded apple

For the maple glaze

- 1½ cups confectioners' sugar
- 1 tablespoon maple syrup
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 tablespoon milk, plus more as needed

Instructions:

1. Melt the butter in a heavy bottom saucepan over medium heat for 7 to 10 minutes, or until the butter starts to foam. Whisk continuously until brown bits start to form. Depending on your stove and saucepan, the entire process should take 10 to 15 minutes. Immediately remove the pan from the heat, and pour the brown butter into the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment to cool slightly.
2. In a medium mixing bowl, whisk together the flour, almond flour, apple pie spice, baking soda, baking powder and salt until well combined. Add the sugars, applesauce, egg yolk and vanilla to the butter and mix until smooth and well combined. Stir the dry ingredients into the wet until just combined. Fold in the shredded apple until well combined. Cover the dough with plastic wrap and chill it in the fridge for at least 2 hours.
3. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Line two large baking sheets with parchment paper.
4. Scoop 2-tablespoon amounts of cookie dough onto the baking sheets, spacing them 2 inches apart. Bake for 12 to 14 minutes, or until the edges of the cookies are set and lightly golden brown and the centers are slightly puffed. Keep the cookies on the hot baking sheets for 5 minutes before transferring them to a cooling rack to cool to room temperature.
5. While the cookies cool, make the glaze. In a medium mixing bowl, add the confectioners' sugar and stir in the maple syrup, vanilla and milk until well combined. Drizzle the glaze on top of the cooled cookies. Allow 20 to 30 minutes for the glaze to set before serving.





Blood orange **Rosemary Cookies** // *Makes 24 cookies*

Ingredients:

For the blood orange rosemary cookies

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1½ teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- Zest of 3 blood oranges (¼ cup)
- 2–3 teaspoons finely chopped fresh rosemary
- ½ cup olive oil
- 1 large egg, room temperature
- ¼ cup buttermilk, room temperature

For the blood orange glaze

- 1½ cups confectioners' sugar
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- Zest from ½ blood orange (optional)
- 1–3 tablespoons freshly squeezed blood orange juice

Instructions:

1. To make the cookies, in a medium mixing bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, cinnamon and salt until well combined. In a large mixing bowl, whisk the sugar, zest and rosemary until it has the consistency of wet sand. Whisk in the olive oil and egg until smooth and well combined. Alternate mixing the dry ingredients and buttermilk into the wet until all the dry ingredients and buttermilk have been added. Rest the cookie dough at room temperature for 30 minutes.
2. Preheat the oven to 375°F. Line two large baking sheets with parchment paper.
3. Scoop 1-tablespoon amounts of cookie dough onto the baking sheets, spacing them 2 inches apart. Bake for 9 to 11 minutes, or until a finger lightly pressed into the top of the cookie bounces back. Keep the cookies on the hot baking sheets for 3 to 4 minutes before transferring them to a cooling rack to cool to room temperature.
4. While the cookies cool, make the glaze. In a medium mixing bowl, add the confectioners' sugar. Whisk in the lemon juice, zest if using and 1 to 3 tablespoons of the blood orange juice, to taste. Spoon the glaze over the cooled cookies, and let it set for 30 to 45 minutes before serving.

spiced mexican Wedding Cookies // *Makes 32 cookies*

Ingredients:

- 1 cup pecans
- 2¼ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1 cup unsalted butter, room temperature
- 1½ cups confectioners' sugar, divided
- Zest of 1 medium orange
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ½ teaspoon almond extract

Instructions:

1. Place the pecans in a small skillet, and lightly toast them over medium-low heat for 4 to 5 minutes, or until fragrant. Transfer the pecans to a food processor. Process until the pecans are fine like the texture of almond flour. Cool slightly before using in the recipe. In a medium mixing bowl, whisk together the flour, cinnamon, baking powder and salt until well combined. Add the butter, ¾ cup of the confectioners' sugar and zest in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment. On medium speed, beat the mixture for 3 to 4 minutes, or until light and fluffy. Scrape the bottom and sides of the bowl as needed. On low speed, mix in the ground pecans and vanilla and almond extracts until smooth and well combined. Scrape the bottom and sides of the bowl as needed. On low, mix the dry ingredients into the wet until well combined. Wrap the dough in plastic wrap, and chill it in the fridge for 30 minutes.
2. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Line two large baking sheets with parchment paper.
3. Scoop 1-tablespoon amounts of the cookie dough onto the baking sheets, spacing them 2 inches apart. Bake for 10 to 12 minutes, or until the edges are lightly golden brown. Cool the cookies on the hot baking sheet for 15 minutes. While the cookies are still slightly warm, roll them in the remaining confectioners' sugar. Cool completely to room temperature and roll them once more in the confectioners' sugar if you would like a double coat of sugar.



a powerful Home DIYer

interview with: AMANDA HENDRIX

written by: LAUREN KIM

photography: AMANDA HENDRIX

When Amanda Hendrix, creator of the blog *Love and Renovations*, bought her first home more than a decade ago, she was wary of power tools. Now that she's moved into what she hopes will be her forever home in Austin, Texas, she uses them all the time to renovate and customize it—and loves sharing her decorating and do-it-yourself tips with other homeowners.





How would you describe your decorating style?

It's hard to label it, but I'd call it modern traditional. I like having a lot of classic elements in my home, such as moldings, wallpaper, prints, and patterns, but I prefer to use them in a modern way. A great example is how my husband, Corey, and I decorated our primary bedroom. We have traditional picture molding on our walls, but we've painted it a dark, almost black navy, and it adds a bit of unexpected color to the room. I like playing with various decorating styles; I think a home feels more dynamic when they are mixed.



What kind of look do you try to create in your home?

I want it to be beautiful and a place where we can live comfortably. We have kids, and all my friends have kids, so there are children in my house constantly. That's why I like to use easy-to-clean fabrics. For example, it's always been a priority for me to have a couch where I can remove the cushion covers and wash them because I know they're going to get disgusting. I also look for surfaces that can easily be wiped off. Our coffee table is a good example; it's made of white concrete, which is much easier to maintain than wood.

How did you first begin working with power tools?

I've always loved fixing up my home and updating it, but when Corey and I were in our first house, I left anything that required power tools to him. I didn't touch any until I was in my late twenties; I was terrified of them. Eventually, I decided I should be able to complete DIY projects around the house myself, so I started learning how to work with power tools one at a time. I began by asking him to walk me through how to use them. Now I've built more things for our home than he has.



What was your first woodworking project? A miter saw was the very first tool I learned how to use. To get some practice with it, I made a geometric wood wall hanging since I knew I wasn't ready to assemble furniture yet. I cut all the pieces of wood and glued them onto a piece of plywood. It turned out beautifully, and it was cool to see that I could create something intricate like that.

What basic power tools should every DIYer have?

They should own a drill and a driver set, which will allow





them to hang things on walls and put furniture together; my drill is one of my most-used tools. It's also a very easy power tool to get started with since it's much less intimidating than others. A handheld circular saw is also good to start out with because it's very versatile. It can be used to cut large or small pieces of wood and is handy for many projects. It might also be helpful to have a miter saw if you want to make angled cuts or cut down two-by-fours or standard lumber.

How can a beginner learn to use power tools? Before working with power tools, they should research how to use them properly. I have a few tutorials on my website they could use, and there are other online guides available too. Then it's just a matter of giving the tools a try. The biggest hurdle that prevents most people from completing a do-it-yourself project is a fear of messing up; however, it's imperative to push through that worry. There are going to be mistakes—they're just part of the learning process.

Which home renovations are your favorites? I love how my son Grant's room turned out. I hung plaid wallpaper on the top halves of the walls and added wood trim to the bottom halves. Then my husband and I modified a few IKEA Billy bookcases

to make them look like built-ins; they add so much storage to the room. We painted the bookcases, the ceiling, and the walls a rich green to match the wallpaper and give the room a very cozy feel; plus, the bright-yellow dresser really pops against the walls.

I also love our primary bedroom. It's a calm space. In addition to the very dark navy-blue walls, we have white bedding, a lot of wood accents, a cozy leather chair, a big gold mirror, and several potted plants. I think having greenery in a room makes it feel alive; even adding some faux plants can greatly improve a space.

Which DIY project are you proudest of? If I had to choose one, I'd have to say the playhouse shaped like a vintage camper that I built for my kids in our backyard. It was a massive undertaking. I created my own plans, which were inspired by a similar camper my kids really liked at a children's museum. It took me two weeks of hard work to complete it. Inside there's a bench, a fabric swing, a little table, and a play kitchen. Nothing in the playhouse is permanent, so we can change it as the kids grow. I'm happy with the finished product—it's the biggest project I've ever completed.

For more info, visit
loveandrenovations.com

CREATIVE *and inexpensive* HOLIDAY DECOR

written by:
ANDRE RIOS

The most festive time of year is upon us, which means it's time to set out colorful trimmings that embrace the holiday spirit. For many people, though, decorating involves either investing money in new seasonal products (during an already expensive season) or unboxing well-worn holiday staples that may not have aged so gracefully.

Why not take a leap this year instead and throw your festive spirit into some unexpected and creative DIY decor? When you make your own crafts, you can save a good chunk of money while minimizing the amount of wasteful packaging you throw away. In addition, DIY decor stimulates your creativity and encourages you to step outside the box with your seasonal style. Check out these fun and rewarding holiday crafts you can easily make with loved ones.



CREATIVE CHRISTMAS “TREES”

Save a tree—and the energy required to produce an artificial one. The Christmas tree silhouette is so recognizable that you can stack just about anything into its shape to create the same festive vibe. For example, paint egg cartons, bottle corks, or cereal boxes in holiday colors like red, green, and gold, and stack them into a pyramid. Apply some glue for extra stability, then tack on decor like cotton “snowballs” and ribbons made of strips of fabric cut from old clothing or linens.

You can also arrange the books on your shelves in a tree-like, cascading triangle shape, hanging ornaments off the spines and topping it all off with a star. For a rustic tree silhouette, scour your yard for craft materials. Arrange long twigs into a triangular shape, attach them with a strip of twine, and glue on natural debris like acorns, nuts, and leaves. To finish, simply tie the twine to a hook at the top and hang it on a wall.





RIBBON GARLAND

Instead of using the typical green or tinsel garland, craft a chain of surprising and whimsical shapes into original pieces to drape on your walls, banisters, or tree.

Materials

- Unwanted paper, plastic, Styrofoam, and other lightweight materials
- Acrylic paint in holiday colors
- A hammer and nail
- Thin, sturdy rope
- A large paintbrush

Directions

1. Collect recyclables about the size of your hand, or cut other materials like cardboard to the appropriate size. Cut the edges or smooth out the materials so they lie flat.
2. Arrange them on some newspaper or a tablecloth.
3. Dispense the paint onto a palette or plate. Dip the paintbrush in water, shaking off the excess, and then in the paint. Apply to one side of the materials in whatever design you'd like.
4. Let the pieces dry. (This can take up to two hours.) Flip them over, and paint their other side, being sure to also cover any thick edges.
5. Once dry, puncture the center of each piece with the nail.
6. Tie one end of the rope with a stopper knot. Slip the materials onto the rope, alternating colors however you'd like.
7. Once you've filled up the garland, cut off any excess rope, leaving a few inches of slack. Tie off the free end with another stopper knot.
8. Find a spot to show off your new garland.



SEASONAL PLANTERS

Display winter beauties like poinsettias and Norfolk pines in festive DIY planters. Start by cleaning out objects like tin cans and paper cups. With a hammer and nail, carefully puncture a few drain holes in the bottom of each, then decorate them using materials like paint, stencils, scrapbook paper, or papier-mâché. Once they're dry, fill the bottom of each "pot" with a layer of pebbles, add some potting soil, and drop in your holiday plant of choice.



SLEEVE STOCKINGS

Who says stockings have to be shaped like a giant foot? Cut off the sleeve of an unwanted shirt, jacket, or sweater, then sew the smaller end shut. Decorate the top end with a cuff of patterned fabric using a needle and thread or a hot-glue gun. You can even make "stockings" from the pockets of unwanted jeans and pants. Sites like Pinterest have plenty of images to inspire your project.

Decorating shouldn't have to break the bank. This year, save money and other resources with DIY holiday decor. Try some of these quick crafts with your family and friends for fun bonding events—and some impressive decor to show for it.





WINTER

written by:
BONNIE JOFFE

Home-Selling Tips



Even though it's often chilly and gloomy, winter can provide distinct advantages for selling your home; less competition, lower inventory levels, and motivated buyers can help you obtain a higher sales price. So don't let this time of year dissuade you from selling! Use these tips to showcase your home's best features and ensure a successful sale during the off-season.

BOOST *your curb appeal*

Depending on your location, this could be your home's best-selling feature. But enhancing the appearance of its exterior doesn't need to be costly. Even the most minor tweaks, such as adding lights, seasonal plantings, or a fresh coat of paint to your front door, can make all the difference.

Clear the walkways

Start by clearing the walkways and door entrances, removing any debris, mud, and standing water. If you live in a cold climate, be sure to shovel and salt the front and back walkways and take down any icicles by your door entrances. To keep your home clean from salt residue and dirt, you may want to request that buyers remove their footwear or provide them with disposable foot coverings as they tour your home.

Decorate the exterior in moderation

One of the benefits of selling in winter is that it allows you to take advantage of holiday lights and seasonal decor. If you typically decorate your home's exterior, consider leaving a few of them up past the New Year to keep your home looking festive and bright. However, put away religious memorabilia to make it easier for buyers to envision themselves in your home.



STAGE *for the season*

During winter, the days are shorter and the temperatures cooler, which can present different challenges when preparing your home for a showing. This doesn't mean you need to redecorate—just make some adjustments with lighting, temperature, seasonal decor, and colors.

Create a bright, cheerful atmosphere

Spice things up a bit by incorporating vibrant winter colors into your home. Think jewel tones, such as plum, emerald, and royal blue, for accessories like throw pillows, blankets, and area rugs. Also, place fresh-cut seasonal flowers and plants in the main areas of your home to create a bright, sunny atmosphere even when the sun isn't out.

For daytime showings, draw all the shades and blinds to let in as much natural light as possible and turn on all overhead lighting. If the buyer has scheduled a late-day or evening tour,

keep table and floor lamps on to create a warm atmosphere and make sure your exterior is well lit to both display its attractiveness and ensure the buyer's safety.

Set the mood

On cooler days, keep your home's thermostat at a comfortable temperature. And if you have a fireplace, flaunt it—flip on the switch or add a fresh log to create a warm, welcoming environment. Light one or two unscented candles, and play easy-listening music. It's also not passé to bake some cookies, brew a fresh pot of coffee, or offer buyers and agents a cup of hot cider to create a comforting tone and a friendly atmosphere.

Dress your house for success this winter to make the best first impression possible. Keep your decor simple and crisp, and remember that less is often more.





The Ins and Outs of **INSULATION**

written by: ANDRE RIOS

Good insulation is like a cozy jacket for your home, forming a barrier against cold outdoor temperatures and promoting efficient indoor heating. But insulation also has a cooling effect during the hottest months. It keeps cold, comfortable air indoors while blocking sweltering heat from baking your house and making you sweat. And, as a bonus, it can help you save up to 15 percent on heating and cooling costs.

But that's assuming your insulation is up to par. Low-quality products may have a measly R-value, which measures how well materials prevent heat from transferring through them. Meanwhile, insufficient insulation could leave attics, garages, and other vulnerable areas of your home completely uninsulated, making climate control for your entire home more expensive.



If your home’s energy costs have been gradually increasing or you’ve noticed temperature fluctuations between rooms, it may be a good idea to invest in superior insulation. Here’s what you need to know about insulating your home to help you save energy and money.

A BEVY OF OPTIONS

Selecting the best material for your home can be complicated. There are dozens of insulators to choose from, ranging from classic options like spray-on foam to innovative products like reflective foil sheets. Certain choices have surprising perks. For example, mineral wool fiber is resistant to very high temperatures, and sprayed-on foam is suitable for unusual structural layouts. Some materials are even designed to deter pests.

Of course, not every material works for every home. The following types offer the most remarkable and comprehensive benefits to homeowners.

Most affordable: radiant barrier

Radiant barrier relies on unique technology to reflect heat and keep interiors cool. It is effective yet incredibly affordable thanks to its commonplace materials: typically a paper filling and an aluminum foil wrapper. In addition to being inexpensive to purchase and install, this material is also one of the best options for homeowners in hot climates.

Best for DIY: blanket batts and rolls

This well-known product resembles a cushioned blanket that you simply slip onto your open walls, making it a go-to choice for unfinished attics, basements, and garages. Blanket batts and rolls are available in materials like fiberglass and mineral wool and are produced in standard sizes to suit construction-regulation gaps between floor joists, wall studs, and attic rafters. Just

be sure to wear eye protection and a mask during installation since these materials release irritating dust when handled.

Surprisingly effective: polystyrene

Extruded polystyrene foam boards are such effective insulators that your resulting energy savings can offset the cost to produce them—despite their being made of nonbiodegradable plastic. In addition, the material is thin, moisture resistant, long-lasting, and easy to install. That said, green homeowners may want to opt for eco-friendly organic insulators, which can contain biodegradable cork, humane sheep’s wool, or even recycled denim.



THE RIGHT FIT

When combined with properly sealed doors, windows, and vents, good insulation offers a heat-resistant barrier for your home, saving you money and promoting year-round comfort. But it’s not a one-size-fits-all tool: the ideal insulation for your home largely depends on the climate zone you live in, and there are even distinct recommendations for spaces like attics and exterior walls. Get to know these materials thoroughly, and consider discussing options with an insulation contractor before making a purchase to improve your home’s comfort.

For more info, visit energy.gov/energysaver/insulation





written by: LAUREN KIM

Upgrade YOUR HOLIDAY LEFTOVERS

Now that the big meal is over, it's time to enjoy all those leftovers! But don't just reheat your remaining food—try these creative and tasty ideas instead.

FRIED POTATOES

If you have some remaining mashed potatoes from the holidays, turn them into crispy potato pancakes and top them with cranberry sauce, sour cream, or applesauce.

EVERYTHING PIE

Making a shepherd's pie is another excellent way to use not only mashed potatoes but also other leftovers. Simply combine some meat and/or veggies with gravy, and scoop the mixture into individual ramekins, a cast-iron pan, or a Dutch oven. Top with the potatoes and a generous amount of cheese, and bake it until everything is warmed through and the cheese is melted.

MELTY SANDWICHES

Not sure how to use your leftover turkey, chicken, beef, or pork? Make some barbecue sliders by mixing the meat with barbecue sauce, sandwiching it with some cheddar cheese between two slices of crusty bread, and toasting it in the oven.

QUICHE

Creating a quick quiche will help you make use of your leftover meat and veggies. Mix them with eggs and milk or a milk substitute, pour it all into a premade piecrust, and bake the mixture until set.

STIR-FRY

For a fun twist, make a stir-fry with any remaining meat, rice, and veggies by sautéing them with onions, garlic, soy sauce, and scrambled eggs.



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MAKES 32 COOKIES

spiced mexican WEDDING COOKIES

ingredients:

- 1 c. pecans
- 2¼ c. all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp. ground cinnamon
- ½ tsp. baking powder
- ¼ tsp. salt
- 1 c. unsalted butter, room temperature
- 1½ c. confectioners' sugar, divided
- Zest of 1 medium orange
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- ½ tsp. almond extract

instructions:

1. Place the pecans in a small skillet, and lightly toast them over medium-low heat for 4 to 5 minutes, or until fragrant. Transfer the pecans to a food processor. Process until the pecans are fine like the texture of almond flour. Cool slightly before using in the recipe. In a medium mixing bowl, whisk together the flour, cinnamon, baking powder and salt until well combined. Add the butter, ¾ c. of the confectioners' sugar and zest in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment. On medium speed, beat the mixture for 3 to 4 minutes, or until light and fluffy. Scrape the bottom and sides of the bowl as needed. On low speed, mix in the ground pecans and vanilla and almond extracts until smooth and well combined. Scrape the bottom and sides of the bowl as needed. On low, mix the dry ingredients into the wet until well combined. Wrap the dough in plastic wrap, and chill it in the fridge for 30 minutes.
2. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Line two large baking sheets with parchment paper.
3. Scoop 1-tbsp. amounts of the cookie dough onto the baking sheets, spacing them 2 inches apart. Bake for 10 to 12 minutes, or until the edges are lightly golden brown. Cool the cookies on the hot baking sheet for 15 minutes. While the cookies are still slightly warm, roll them in the remaining confectioners' sugar. Cool completely to room temperature and roll them once more in the confectioners' sugar if you would like a double coat of sugar.

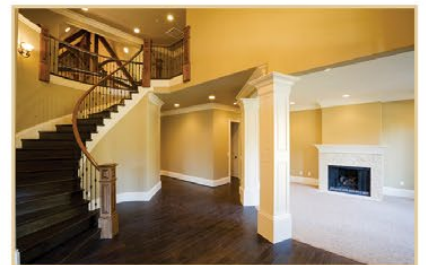
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